



Frequently Asked Questions

Refine and Implement Pilot Approach for Food for Peace
Development Food Security Activities

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Acronyms

AOR	Agreement Officer Representative
FFP	Office of Food for Peace
HQ	Headquarters
IPTT	Indicator Performance Tracking Table
LogFrame	Logical Framework
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
R&I	Refine and Implement
SoW	Scope of Work
ToC	Theory of change
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

1. What is Refine and Implement?

Refine and Implement (R&I) is a pilot approach for the development of food security activities supported by the Office of Food for Peace (FFP). The approach has two phases -- a refinement phase and an implementation phase. The first year of a five-year award is the refinement phase. During this refinement phase, successful awardees will refine their activity's theory of change (ToC) and interventions in close collaboration with FFP staff, based on the baseline data, community priorities and needs, institutional mapping, assessments and studies, and research that will be conducted during the year.

2. Why did FFP decide to pilot a Refine and Implement Approach?

FFP envisions the R&I approach will contribute to an evidence based, effective activity design which will result in substantially higher food and nutrition security gains. The activity design will consider the priorities of the communities, operating environment, contextual factors, capacities of local institutions and service providers, and other investments in the target area. FFP expects that during the refinement year, awardees will refine the theory of change based on evidence, invest in staff development, and tailor social and behavior change strategies to the local norms and context. Awardees will refine interventions considering the capacity and outreach of public and private service providers, institutions and governance structures, community capacities and complementary services offered by other actors.

3. What activities will the awardees conduct during the refinement phase?

Awardees, in collaboration with FFP, will:

First three months:

- a) Key program staff are hired and on-boarded;
- b) Program operations (offices, transportation, legal registration, permits, etc.) are set up;
- c) Consultations with key stakeholders at the local, sub-national, and national level are held to introduce the program, and build alliances;
- d) Review and refine the geographic targeting at the community level;
- e) Provide a list of communities to FFP to include in the baseline survey;
- f) Analyze the operating environment and policies that might influence the implementation and success of activities;

Four to six months:

- g) Train staff in participatory, adult learning, effective social and behavior change techniques, conduct needs assessments, activity implementation, and monitoring;
- h) Institute program-stakeholder feedback loops to test and validate design assumptions, inform strategy refinement, and build trust;

- i) Consult and engage in active listening with the communities to hear their priorities and validate proposed interventions, assumptions and the overall ToC;
- j) Develop SOWs for key assessments/studies and conduct the studies;
- k) Design and carry out formative research and the initial environmental examination;
- l) Begin a gender and market analysis; understand the major shocks and stresses, their impact on the communities, and how people manage them;
- m) Undertake program participant registration and create program database;
- n) Establish MoUs with key stakeholders;
- o) Procure supplies and equipment; and
- p) Initiate activity start up plans, e.g., administrative tasks, equipment and supply purchases, human resources.

During community consultations, awardees will: hear the communities' priorities and needs, discuss causes of and vulnerability to food insecurity and malnutrition, and capacity to recover from food insecurity shocks. The awardees will develop a map of all actors (private sector actors, non-government organizations, community institutions, traditional authorities, and government departments) who offer complementary services/activities to the target population to achieve food and nutrition security objectives; and meet with the external actors to understand their activities' scope, objectives, capacity and outreach, and plans. In addition to required analyses (gender, environmental impact, and climate change impact), awardees may choose to investigate program areas where knowledge gaps exist e.g. barriers to optimum health and nutrition practices for pregnant and lactating mothers and children under two; barriers and proven pathways to proper hygiene, sanitation, and access to safe water; challenges and opportunities to recovery from food insecurity; and water resources vulnerability analysis. It is important to note that some of the assessments/studies may continue after the first six months of the refinement period.

From month seven to month twelve, awardees will:

- q) Review the ToC and refine it along with select activity strategies based on the results from the baseline survey and other research, assessments, and analyses;
- r) Establish a learning contract¹ with the direct participants; establish offices as required to support the implementation and monitoring of activities;
- s) Develop a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan integrating gender, youth, environment and climate change indicators, as appropriate and as required;
- t) Finalize targets for all FFP indicators applicable for the activity;
- u) Establish partnerships with activities supported by Bureau of Food Security, Global Health, Global Climate Change and other activities supported by the Mission with benchmarks; and
- v) Continue to hire and train staff. Toward the end of this period, the chief of party for each award will present the refined activity design to a team composed of FFP staff in

¹ A learning contract is a mutual understanding between a potential participant and the activity in which the activity and the participant verbally agree to a set of common objectives; the activity commits to a list of services that it will support to achieve these objectives; and the participants verbally commit to participate in meetings/sessions on a regular basis and adopt the practices that s/he will learn from the activity to achieve the same objectives.

the Mission, technical staff and Agreement Officer Representative (AOR) from FFP Washington, DC, and Regional Office staff, if feasible, highlighting changes from the original and the reasons for the changes along with supporting data.

4. How will an awardee identify and decide on which assessments and/or studies to conduct?

A decision concerning the number and types of studies and assessments during the refinement phase is a collaborative effort between the awardees, FFP, and USAID Mission. Initial Environmental Examination, Climate Screening and Gender Assessment are required by FFP. All other studies/assessments/research will be determined based on the information need of the activity to refine their ToC as well as the availability of information to address the information gaps. The activity should conduct a review of the existing studies and hold discussions with the relevant government ministries, the national statistics office, USAID Mission, research organizations, other donor agencies, and relevant actors in the country. FFP will organize an inception workshop in which FFP, Mission, and awardee staff will collectively identify and prioritize needed assessments and studies based on the information gaps identified. FFP and awardee's staff will also jointly develop scopes of work (SOW) for the assessments and studies. Within 15 days of the workshop, the awardees should submit the SOWs to AOR, and USAID should review and jointly finalize the SOWs within 15 days of receiving the draft SoWs.

5. Who will carry out these assessments and/or studies?

FFP expects that the awardee staff will actively be involved in these assessments and/or studies. While specialists are encouraged to design, and lead the studies, the awardee staff should actively participate in planning, data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the findings. This will help the staff to own the information as well as the process; they will intimately learn the topics, their capacity will be enhanced. This should be anticipated in the activity's budget and PREP. The awardee is responsible for contracting any required consultants.

6. What are the M&E requirements for the refinement phase?

Awardees should hire and train M&E staff on different aspects of monitoring, and ensure their participation in the M&E and ToC workshops. They will be expected to read the FFP M&E and Reporting Policy and Guidance; and draft the M&E plan for the activity based on this guidance. While the baseline survey for evaluation indicators will be carried out by an external contractor contracted by FFP, the awardee M&E staff will collect base values for monitoring indicators. Instead of a survey, FFP strongly encourages collecting the base-values for monitoring indicators during participant registration.

At the ToC workshop, awardees will finalize the activity ToC, logical framework (LogFrame), and Indicator Performance Tracking Table, ensuring that it reflects the findings of the baseline survey and any specialized analyses, as well as those emerging from required analysis.

7. When are the ToC, LogFrame, IPTT, M&E Plan and IEE due to FFP?

The revised ToC, LogFrame, and IPTT will be due to FFP within 60 days after the completion of the ToC workshop. In addition, the awardee should complete and submit the M&E Plan for the activity, gender analysis, and the final Activity Initial Environmental Examination within 60 days of the ToC workshop.

Toward the end of the refinement period, the Chief of Party will present the refined activity design to FFP, Mission, and other relevant USAID stakeholders, highlighting changes from the original and the reasons for the changes along with supporting data.

8. What is the role of FFP during the refinement phase?

FFP will be actively involved during the refinement phase. The awardee and FFP technical staff will jointly select a set of study/research topics, jointly draft scopes of work, possibly participate in the assessments/study/research fieldwork or analysis, and jointly refine the ToCs. FFP will review the various reports generated by the awardees' research, assessments, and analyses; manage the baseline survey firm; review the draft baseline survey report; and possibly participate in additional scoping visits with awardee technical staff. Ideally, FFP will arrange a gender and M&E workshop in the second quarter of the fiscal year and a ToC refinement workshop in the fourth quarter.

9. What is the role of the Mission during the refinement phase?

FFP and other Mission staff bring invaluable knowledge and experience to the refinement phase. The Mission will participate in the selection of study/research topics, drafting scopes of work, and jointly refine the ToCs. FFP Mission staff will review the various reports generated by the awardees' research, assessments, and analyses; provide oversight of the baseline survey firm; review the draft baseline survey report; and possibly participate on additional scoping visits with awardee technical staff. Ideally, the Mission staff will be active participants in the gender and M&E workshops, and ToC refinement workshop. FFP Mission staff are strongly encouraged to engage other Mission experts during the refinement phase.

10. Should awardees hire all staff during the refinement phase?

Key awardee staff are expected to participate in activities throughout the refinement phase. In addition, since the refinement phase is foundational to all interventions, it is important that the awardees' core implementation staff participate in these phase as well, and awardees should plan accordingly. This would mean hiring most of the activity's staff early in the refinement period. However, if the award has a commodity distribution component, the awardee may

decide to hire the commodity management staff toward the end of the refinement phase in preparation for the arrival of the commodities.

11. What are FFP's expectations for the implementation phase?

The implementation phase will cover Year Two through Year Five. Since all the preparatory work will be done in Year One, during the Refinement Phase, FFP expects that the awardee to start full scale implementation from the beginning of the second year, i.e., Year Two. However, if an earlier start is promoted by an awardee, and supported by the work accomplished during the refinement phase, this may be negotiated with FFP.

12. What are the M&E requirements for the implementation phase?

Based on the M&E plan, the awardee will monitor the performance of the activities. During the implementation phase, FFP/USAID Mission/Regional Office staff with the awardee's HQ/Country Office and Regional Office staff will organize structured biennial joint monitoring visits. In Year Four, FFP will conduct an independent interim summative evaluation. Within four months of the interim independent evaluation and receipt of final report(s), FFP will notify awardees its decision regarding extension. Only exceptionally high performing/high achieving activities that have substantial potential to make a larger contribution to the food and nutrition security goal will be considered for an extension. FFP defines exceptional high-performing activities as those that have made substantial progress in key food and nutrition security outcome indicators, and have established foundations of sustainability reflecting context specific factors to enhance motivation, capacity, linkages and access to resources. These would include, for example, activities to strengthen systems that strengthen social accountability and the institutional environment, as well as strengthened service delivery systems to sustain outcomes.

13. What would FFP require from awardees for an extension phase?

At a minimum FFP will require extension plans, budgets, revised targets, and possibly a few new indicators. In addition, extensions will be subject to availability of funds and commodities, along with approval by USAID authorities. Given the timing of the interim external evaluation, those awards with extensions will have a final evaluation 12-18 months prior to the new end date, while those awards maintaining the original end dates will not have a final evaluation.

14. What would happen to the activities that are not exceptionally high performing?

If activities are deemed successful or less than successful, performing moderately or below what was envisioned-- and/or gains are linked only to a unsustainable program inputs-- FFP will maintain their original end dates. For these activities, close out plans would be due as indicated in the award language, i.e., six months prior to the award's end date. Note that any poorly

performing, troubled activity may be terminated at any time at the discretion of the Agreement Officer.

15. Would the exceptionally high performing activities continue to carry out the same set of interventions in the extended phase?

FFP expects that the activities awarded an extension will reinforce gains and invest in the sustainability of outcomes and necessary services during the extension phase.

16. Can the awardees implement activity interventions during the refinement phase?

The refinement phase provides an opportunity to the awardees to fill information gaps, consult with the communities, set up offices, hire and train staff, identify and select direct activity participants, and refine their theory of change. Should an awardee decide to start implementation of interventions during the refinement phase, in discussion with the AOR, awardee can do so. However, substantial implementation is discouraged before completing the refinement of the program.

17. When is the first Pipeline Resource Estimate Proposal due?

During the refinement phase, an awardee will be developing a better understanding about their activity's interventions and its resource requirements. Similarly, FFP will learn more about the types of interventions that are necessary to achieve the project purposes. The awardee will submit a PREP reflecting the resource required in the year 2 and 3 implementation years.

18. When will awardees submit a call forward?

The AOR and the awardee will jointly identify the timing of the first call forward to ensure that commodities are in the awardee warehouse for distribution when they are needed (normally the start of year two).

19. Timeline for Key Processes

